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1952

LOUISIANA

POST-SEASON AGRICULTURAL

and

FOOD PROCESSING REPORT

1952

5212 Farm Labor Supply and Demand (continued)

C. Labor Supplies (continued)

3. Other Sources. Only in two crops were foreign workers employed in Louisiana. These were cotton and sugar cane. Mexican nationals were employed in cotton hoeing and harvesting and British West Indians (Jamaicans) were employed in planting and harvesting sugar cane and cotton. Puerto Rican workers are not employed in agricultural work in Louisiana.

Foreign labor is not employed in Louisiana agriculture to any great extent. These workers comprised less than one-half of one per cent of the total agricultural labor force in 1952. Foreign workers were imported only when it became apparent that local, intrastate, and interstate recruitment efforts would not provide sufficient domestic labor for the crop activity.

- D. Mechanization. Increased mechanization had only moderate effect in reducing labor requirements from the past season. Growers of sugar cane and rice have been showing more and more inclination to mechanize in recent years, especially in regard to harvesting equipment. This trend was not retarded the past season. At the present time the rice crop is mechanized to such an extent that adequate labor supplies are no longer a problem.

The mechanical cotton picker was more extensively used by Louisiana growers last season than in the previous years. Contract mechanical cotton picking seems to be gaining more acceptance among growers than last season, but their use is mainly restricted to areas of high yield per acre. Near ideal weather conditions were most responsible for the less than full utilization of available mechanical pickers. Growers still show a preference for hand picked cotton. Had the need arisen for expediency in gathering the cotton crop, undoubtedly more cotton would have been picked mechanically. In some areas, a lack of ginning facilities to handle machine picked cotton hampered the use of the machine. In any event, about 18 per cent of the cotton was picked mechanically which is several percentiles greater than last season.

Some crop activities in Louisiana have resisted mechanization, e. g., strawberry and tung nut harvesting. Experimentation is underway to perfect a machine to gather tung nuts, but it has not been perfected as yet. To date, no machine has been perfected to supplant hand labor in the strawberry harvest.

5213 Recruitment and Direction of Seasonal and Year-Round Workers (continued)

D. Recruitment and Placement Problems (continued)

recruitment problems. In the sugar cane area, many industrial firms operate busses through the sugar cane producing areas picking up and delivering workers daily. Added to this situation several multi-million dollar manufacturing firms are being built within the sugar cane area which will further intensify the agricultural recruitment problem. Wage differentials in the same crop activity causes labor placement problems. From a purely individualistic standpoint, fluctuating wage rates may be a healthy condition. However, such a situation present serious problems to farm placement personnel in their attempt to place all available labor for as long as possible in order that the crop activity may be completed without loss or damage.

The lack of adequate housing is one of the major causes for the small migrations of intrastate and interstate workers in and to Louisiana. Much of the housing that is offered migrants is of run-down tenant-cabin variety which is wholly inadequate to attract reliable migrant labor.

Suitable housing to accommodate migrant labor is inadequate primarily because, over the years, Louisiana has had little need for outside labor. The lack of an established migratory labor pattern has made the recruitment and placement process all the more difficult. Outside labor demand from year to year is very inconsistent. One year a particular area may have need for 500 out-of-area workers, the next year 4,000 workers may be needed; consequently, an established migratory labor pattern does not exist in Louisiana.

The fact that the peak season of cotton, which absorbs most labor, usually coincides with the peak season in adjacent states presents a serious interstate recruitment problem. Coupled with this fact is the fact that growers in adjacent states generally offer wages in excess of wages paid in Louisiana.

The policy of some growers in placing orders for workers in excess of their needs, as a form of insurance, makes for difficult placement problems. This practice is followed by some growers when they already have sufficient labor promised from other sources.

5214 Puerto Rican and Foreign Labor.

- A. There were 52 different employers in Louisiana who placed orders for foreign workers during 1952. These orders could not be filled from domestic sources. These orders involved openings for 1,957 workers.

5214 Puerto Rican and Foreign Labor (continued)

B. All of the above orders were recommended for the importation of foreign labor. No Puerto Rican workers were requested or received by Louisiana growers. Seven of the orders requested a total of 383 British West Indian workers to be used in sugar cane planting and harvesting which is, in effect, one continuous operation. One employer requested 16 British West Indian workers for the sugar cane harvest only. One employer requested 52 British West Indian workers for the cotton harvest. Another employer requested 50 British West Indian workers for both cotton cultivation and harvesting.

Twenty requests were received for 542 Mexican nationals for use in cotton cultivation only. Eight requests for 275 Mexican nationals for use in both cotton cultivation and harvesting were received. Fourteen requests were for 564 Mexican nationals for use only in cotton harvesting.

C. During the 1952 season, approximately half the number of foreign workers requested were actually imported. The primary reason for this was the excellent weather conditions that prevailed during the season. As a result of poor coordination during the first of the year (i. e., during planting and cultivating operations), no authentic record is available for the actual number of foreign workers employed. However, the number generally employed during these periods closely approximates the number employed during the harvest season which is listed below.

On the basis of in-season reports for the week including the 15th of the month, foreign worker (Mexican nationals and British West Indians) employment is as follows:

September	630
October	856
November	326
December	324

D. There were few outstanding problems encountered in the use of foreign workers this year which is probably due mostly to the vast reduction in number of foreign workers this year from last year. However, there were the usual complaints of language problems, "skips," lack of work experience, and the lack of understanding regarding worker and employer responsibilities.

Growers employing British West Indian workers were especially satisfied with their work. In fact, there is every indication that these same growers will request this type labor next year unless there is a significant change in agricultural labor market conditions in their areas.

5214 Puerto Rican and Foreign Labor (continued)

D. (continued)

There has been some concern expressed by local offices in the cotton producing areas concerning the preparation of the "Prevailing Wage Report," ES-232. Good cooperation was received from employers and workers in gathering data for this report. However, a great deal of staff time was spent in preparing the reports. The salient point is that while this report has significant statistical value, it interferes directly with the local domestic worker program since the data is collected during the peak of agricultural activity in this state at which time most efforts should be directed toward placing domestic labor.

E. The plans under consideration for reducing the number of foreign workers are not altogether new, but rather an intensification of the old program. Recruitment efforts, especially on a local level, will be intensified, and an attempt will be made to prepare the most accurate pre-season labor requirement estimates as is possible. The most efficient interchange of available labor crews will be continued. The continued advances being made in the use of mechanical equipment, especially in harvesting, should serve to reduce labor requirements considerably. Should the need arise, special efforts will be made to enlist and inform growers of the advantage of utilizing machinery on a custom basis to the greatest extent possible.

5215 Evaluation and Recommendations

The 1952 crop year was one in which Louisiana farmers set new production records in rice, tung nut and sugar cane. Although some gains were made in increased mechanization, there was a further decrease in both year-round and seasonal workers. In spite of this, yield and production set new marks in several major crops.

The unusually favorable harvest weather which lengthened the season contributed most to a successful crop year. There were no reported crop losses or damage as a result of labor deficits. Placement of domestic agricultural labor was hampered by the mid-season installation of new and additional reports from the national level. Additional personnel could not be appointed and trained within the time period. Actual experience indicates that state-wide for September, October, and November some 18% of total direct farm placement staff time was devoted to the gathering of data for and compilation of these reports. This figure will exceed 40% in the cotton producing area where the need for foreign labor, which makes submission of the reports mandatory, exists.

PLACEMENTS AND EMPLOYER VISITS - 1952 STATE SUMMARY

<u>Month</u>	<u>Placements</u>	<u>Employer Visits</u>
January	474	152
February	455	129
March	294	531
April	847	1,037
May	23,998	1,158
June	59,179	1,164
July	18,742	552
August	25,788	1,242
September	117,716	1,575
October	124,886	1,267
November	60,265	585
December	<u>23,358</u>	<u>273</u>
TOTAL	456,002	9,665

PRE-SEASON ESTIMATED LABOR NEEDS - BY MAJOR CROPS

1952

<u>Months</u>	<u>Cotton</u>	<u>Sugar Cane</u>	<u>Rice</u>	<u>Straw- berries</u>	<u>Sweet Potatoes</u>	<u>Tung Nuts</u>
January	0	5,919	1,517	4,145	364	3,600
February	10,643	7,399	1,517	4,145	2,545	4,500
March	21,702	19,237	2,909	10,109	4,364	1,400
April	52,236	17,758	6,058	10,436	6,909	600
May	109,309	25,156	4,556	873	7,278	600
June	95,633	10,358	4,556	836	5,090	600
July	12,054	2,973	2,909	836	1,091	600
August	62,684	1,480	12,141	873	364	600
September	147,869	25,156	21,254	909	4,364	850
October	86,793	42,914	15,171	1,382	17,455	1,500
November	8,036	44,394	2,275	2,109	0	5,500
December	0	17,758	759	2,145	0	7,000